

Evaluating the State of Mobility Management and Specialized Transportation Coordination in Delaware

June 2017

Prepared for

Delaware Department of Transportation

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Executive Summary

Purpose of Project

Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 project work launched a multi-phase plan to evaluate the state of mobility and specialized transportation services coordination in Delaware. The Institute for Public Administration (IPA), in partnership with Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC), an operating division of the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), conducted extensive research and community outreach to better understand and develop recommendations for the implementation of policies and partnerships to improve Delaware’s specialized transportation and mobility management framework.

Outcomes of the research and outreach work are detailed throughout this report and identify several recurring themes and ongoing challenges:

- Delaware’s ongoing mobility and specialized transportation challenges are exacerbated by the state’s increasing senior¹ population and demands on current public transit options.
- Primary “demand drivers,” beyond changing demographics, include disconnects between land-use and transportation/transit and requested paratransit trips for non-emergency medical trips.
- Mobility coordination challenges are aggravated by a lack of awareness of available services within each county as well as inadequate veterans’ transportation services.
- Unmet mobility needs and service gaps extend beyond DTC’s reach and should include alternative, community-based services besides those provided at the state agency level.
- DTC is committed to addressing the state’s rising costs and demand for specialized transportation services, as evidenced by the agency’s implementation of its Transit Redesign Implementation Plan, which focuses on approaches for managing and delivering coordinated transportation services to all, particularly transportation-disadvantaged individuals.
- New and innovative approaches to addressing the state’s specialized transportation and mobility coordination are possible and underway in Delaware.
- Recognition of current U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) policies and initiatives are imperative and should provide the basis for developing the state’s contemporary mobility management framework.

¹ The terms “senior” and “older adults” are used interchangeably in the report and may be defined as those 65 and older (65+).

- Consideration of national and regional best practices, along with the expansion of new partnerships among the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, are key components of improving the state's transportation services and mobility framework development.

These themes and challenges suggest the need for a comprehensive strategy to address the changing landscape of transportation coordination and mobility management in Delaware. Subsequent work will aim to expand on this initial phase by supporting and advancing initiatives underway to reduce costs pressures for all transit modes, address unrestricted use of paratransit services, and create alternative and affordable transportation options for all Delawareans.

Areas of Focus

This report details the FY 2016 work according to the following areas of focus:

- *Applied Research*: Assessing Current Initiatives and Engaging Specialized Transportation Providers
- *Research and Policy Analysis*: Evaluating National and Delaware-Specific Mobility Management Efforts and Best Practices
- *Education and Outreach*: Facilitating a Statewide Policy Forum and Outreach on Mobility Coordination

Scope of Work and Methodology

Details about the scope and methodology used to conduct this work are described in the Introduction of this report. Highlights of the process include:

Applied Research: Assessment of Current Initiatives and Mobility Management Practices in Delaware

- Gathered detailed information of current initiatives underway to better coordinate specialized transportation services in Delaware.
- Conducted interviews, meetings, and teleconferences with key specialized transportation service providers and stakeholder groups throughout Delaware.
- Prepared a preliminary inventory of all current specialized transportation services in Delaware to include number of clients served, types of services provided, and the location of current service providers.

Research and Policy Analysis: Evaluation of National and Delaware-Specific Mobility Management Efforts and Best Practices

- Researched and analyzed changes in federal and state policies related to specialized transportation and mobility management.
- Conducted a literature review to identify successful “best-practice” models of mobility management and specialized transportation coordination services in other states/regions/jurisdictions.

Education and Outreach: Facilitation of Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach on Mobility Coordination

- Conducted two surveys to gather detailed information of current initiatives underway to better coordinate specialized transportation services in Delaware.
- Convened county-based workshops involving area stakeholders and transportation providers.
- Facilitated a statewide policy forum.

Primary Project Deliverables

- Preliminary Inventory of Specialized Transportation Services in Delaware
- Best-Practice Research and Analysis
- Summary of Survey Responses of Transportation Service Providers
- Summaries of County-Based Workshops
- Summary of Statewide Forum and Polling Results
- Preliminary Maps of Age-Restricted Communities in Delaware
- Final Recommendations and Path Forward

Final Recommendations and Path Forward

Details of IPA's recommendations and suggested path forward are included in the final section of this report. The following are the fundamental recommendations:

- Update the *Delaware Statewide Action Plan to Coordinate Human Services Transportation* (i.e., Statewide Action Plan), which has not been comprehensively updated since published in 2007.
- Realign Delaware's Section 5310 program.
- Advance a mobility management framework in Delaware.
- Consider piloting national best-practice models appropriate for Delaware.
- Develop and implement an ongoing education and outreach strategy.
- Elevate the importance of land-use and transit integration.

Final Recommendations and Path Forward

Outcomes of Phase I work identified several recurring themes and ongoing challenges with specialized transportation services in Delaware and suggested that a comprehensive strategy is needed to address the changing landscape of transportation coordination and mobility management. The following recommendations aim to support and advance initiatives currently underway by the Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC) to reduce cost pressures for all transit modes, address unrestricted use of paratransit services, and create alternative and affordable transportation options for all Delawareans and transportation-disadvantaged populations.

1. Update the Statewide Action Plan (i.e., coordinated plan)

Enacted on December 4, 2015, the FAST Act created a new federal transportation law that provides an increased emphasis on Coordinated Public Transit–Human-Services Transportation Plans. While Delaware’s 2007 “Statewide Action Plan” has been incrementally revised by the DTC, with input from Elderly and Disabled Transit Advisory Committee (EDTAC), it has not been comprehensively updated in the past decade. It is critically important to maintain a current coordinated plan because it provides the foundation to allocate and better leverage federal funding under FTA’s Section 5310 Coordinated Mobility program.

An updated Statewide Action Plan (i.e., coordinated plan) for Delaware should (1) provide a framework to improve coordination among transportation service providers and human-services agencies to enhance transportation services for all transportation-disadvantaged populations, (2) meet federal requirements for a “locally developed, coordinated human-services transportation plan,” and (3) guide DTC’s grant process, eligibility requirements, and the administration of its Section 5310 program. The program no longer focuses strictly on transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. Based on high-priority projects/programs identified in a coordinated plan, Section 5310 funding can now be directed to assist with costs for innovative mobility management activities, the purchase of capital equipment, and operations to meet the mobility needs of all transportation-disadvantaged populations. An updated plan also will better position DTC to compete for Section 3006(b) discretionary funding for Mobility on Demand, Rides to Wellness, and/or other innovative pilot programs that use technology to demonstrate mobility-on-demand solutions within a public transportation framework. To begin, IPA suggests:

- Reviewing current federal FAST Act requirements and reporting standards that guide the development of coordinated public transit–human-services transportation plans.

- Reviewing and assessing the current 2007 Statewide Action Plan to determine if Delaware-specific practices, policies, processes, and plan components meet new federal requirements.
- Garnering cabinet-level support for the planning process that will provide the political will to implement action items and move forward identified short- and long-range mobility efforts.
- Determining options to form committees (either by county and/or statewide) that meet federal law representation requirements to update the plan.
- Considering recommendations developed through the participatory planning process county/statewide committees and obtaining input through additional stakeholder outreach and engagement.
- Drafting an updated plan that is developed and approved through a participatory planning process that meets federal guidelines/requirements to (1) identify the transportation needs/gaps of transportation-disadvantaged populations, (2) provide strategies for meeting those needs, (3) strategically allocate resources—**through a competitive process**—to “high-priority” transportation services, projects, and programs under the Section 5310 Program, and (4) identify potential risks for further changes and funding decreases at the federal level that could diminish current services and programs in Delaware.

2. Realign Delaware’s Section 5310 Program

Both MAP-21 (enacted in 2012) and the FAST Act (enacted December 4, 2015) made important changes to FTA’s Section 5310 program by advancing a mobility management framework. MAP-21 required at least 55 percent of the Section 5310 program to be spent on capital public transportation projects that are planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable. The FAST Act maintains the 55% allocation requirement for capital projects, which are referred to as “Section 5310 Traditional” projects. The other 45 percent may be used for “Non-Traditional” projects. Non-Traditional projects reflect “high-priority” transportation services, projects, and program strategies derived from a coordinated plan. These include capital and operating projects that (1) exceed the requirements of ADA, (2) improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance on complementary paratransit, and/or (3) expand specialized and affordable public transportation options, improve mobility infrastructure, and/or provide innovative technology (e.g., travel information portal/trip planning system). Under the FAST Act, states and local government entities operating public-transit services are now eligible to direct recipients of Section 5310 assistance. This could be used to support

innovative pilot programs in partnership with Section 5310 funding recipients. To proceed, IPA recommends:

- Reviewing and realigning Section 5310 program funding criteria to meet new federal mandates for allocating funding and conducting coordination activities.
- Assessing the need to revamp the Section 5310 program application process and eligibility criteria to enable DTC to better allocate and leverage resources.
- Developing a Section 5310 program funding allocation process that aligns with the need to select “high-priority” projects, services, and programs that are derived from a coordinated plan.
- Revising the Section 5310 program grant management process and applicant eligibility requirements based on new federal funding guidelines;
- Inventory and GIS map service areas and trip frequencies of all 5310 recipients to identify duplication of services and vehicle/trip efficiencies.
- Conducting an inventory of “best-practice” Section 5310 programs (e.g., DOTs, MPOs, regional associations/councils of governments) that have realigned programs to conform to new federal mandates.
- Considering the need to introduce requirements for Section 5310 applicants to:
 - Actively contribute to mobility management efforts, engage in coordination activities, and participate/attend coordinated plan committee meetings.
 - Demonstrate project management (e.g., financial management, asset management, safety and training, and performance reporting).

3. Advance a Mobility Management Framework in Delaware

Mobility on Demand (MOD) is being advanced by FTA as an innovative, user-focused approach that leverages emerging mobility services, integrated transit networks and operations, real-time data, connected travelers, and cooperative Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to allow for a more traveler-centric transportation system. Opportunities for Delaware to compete for federal funding (with DTC as the “lead” agency) could greatly increase the likelihood of moving strategic initiatives forward. Examples include the expansion of existing programs (e.g., Flex, RideShare Delaware) or the development of new innovations such as a one-click/one-call travel information portal/trip planning system to serve as “one-stop shop” resource to make travel arrangements across multiple modes and transportation. Other opportunities to advance the state’s mobility management framework require the evaluation, expansion, and possible replication of current programs designed to offer additional services to seniors and persons with disabilities as well as the consideration of technological and operational efficiencies within DTC services and programs.

3a. Evaluation and Assessment of Current Initiatives and Pilot Programs Underway

- Evaluating outcomes of Flex services piloted in Sussex County and determining whether this service can or should be replicated on other parts of the state.
- Determining the cost savings of partnerships with Easterseals and CHEER aimed at offsetting burdens place on paratransit service. Is this likely to be continued or expanded based on an assessment of these arrangements?
- Expanding the RideShare Delaware program to include trips for transportation-disadvantaged individuals. Would new federal program components support this type of expansion, and, if so, how?

3b. Identify State Policies and Regulatory Interpretations Impacting Delaware's Mobility Coordination Efforts

- Working with other state agency directors and cabinet-level administrators to identify opportunities to work together on common mobility challenges facing clients and their families.
- Reviewing and identifying Delaware's public carrier laws that might encourage additional mobility partnership opportunities.
- Identifying barriers to partnering with other state agencies, nonprofits, and private service providers that might prohibit coordination efforts.

3c. Assess Technological and Operational Efficiencies

- Forming a technical advisory committee to serve and inform a statewide coordinating council. Such a committee would review and advise a coordinating council on the technical merits of Delaware's Section 5310 program and the program's alignment with the Statewide Action Plan (i.e., coordinated plan). The need for a competitive selection process and performance metrics might be considered.
- Reviewing and updating the current paratransit "in-take" and application process to aid in reducing consumer ride time and narrowing gaps between consumers' residences and health- and social-service-related trips (e.g., adding a question regarding proximity between residence and facilities to the application form).
- Implementing demand-management strategies (e.g., trip management activities, feeder services, improved ADA accessibility to transit facilities, paratransit eligibility process, travel training programs) as recommended in the 2007 *Framing the Issues of Paratransit Services in Delaware* report.

- Reviewing current paratransit service application processes to help identify how individuals opt in to select health service locations/facilities and whether opportunities to better influence this selection process exist at the agency level.
- Researching and providing recommendations/best practices for developing and obtaining funding for innovative technology (e.g., travel information portal/trip planning system).
- Identifying mobility management policies, interagency coordination efforts, and collaborative models to help in improving the state’s transportation and health service gaps/efficiencies.
- Identifying health- and social services-related partnerships and initiatives that might assist in relieving current paratransit demand (e.g., telemedicine and community-based health services that require less movement of people to healthcare and service facilities).
- Developing a plan for educating the state’s major healthcare and service providers about the paratransit referral and application process (e.g., service referrals to locations that are closer to patients’ and/or caregivers’ residence).

4. Consider Piloting National Best-Practice Models Appropriate for Delaware

IPA’s research of national best practices identified nine themes that improve mobility and coordination of specialized transportation services. IPA cited best-practice examples, prepared a matrix to summarize outcomes, and evaluated the potential replicability of successful national best practices in Delaware. As part of the update to the 2007 Statewide Action Plan, stakeholders should work together to consider replicability of national best-practice strategies in Delaware, including:

- Developing and implementing a one-click/one-call travel information portal/trip planning system to serve as “one-stop shop” resource to make travel arrangements across multiple modes and transportation.
- Expanding specialized transportation mobility options.
- Utilizing transportation technology.
- Supporting fee-based transportation co-ops.
- Enhancing coordination of services (improving the usability of existing services through new technologies, innovative partnerships/programs, and expanded access).
- Linking land use and transportation planning
- Linking shared-use mobility to public transit (e.g., Uber, Lyft, Lift Hero).
- Improving mobility infrastructure.

- Expanding the Rideshare Delaware program to transportation-disadvantaged populations.

5. Develop and Implement an Ongoing Education and Outreach Strategy

Developing and maintaining ongoing local collaborations and communication with partners is critical to the implementation of new or the expansion of current mobility management and coordination efforts. Moreover, extensive community outreach and public engagement satisfies federal requirements to ensure diverse stakeholder input in developing coordinated plans, improving funding allocation strategies, and competing for federal discretionary grant opportunities. As described in the Request for Proposals/Notice of Funding Opportunity under the 2016 *Ride to Wellness Demonstration and Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants* program, “eligible proposers and eventual grant applicants...must serve as the lead agency of a local consortium that includes stakeholders from the transportation, healthcare, human-services, or other sectors.” In addition, the Phase I (FY16) county-specific workshops emphasized a lack of public awareness regarding several new DART-affiliated and community-based transportation options. Workshop attendees noted the need for more interagency education, awareness, information sharing, and technology-driven travel information portal/trip planning system.

DTC leadership and mobility management staff, in collaboration with identified partner organizations, should consider formulating a community outreach and education strategy. The goal is to develop ongoing strategies for engagement with partners that would assist in advancing the state’s mobility management framework, while improving DTC’s advantage to compete for federal funding opportunities that support statewide mobility and coordination efforts for specialized transportation services. As previously discussed, this includes broadening stakeholder representation to reflect federal public participation mandates. To begin, DTC should consider:

- Developing an outreach and education plan that facilitates and promotes continual communication and engagement with local and statewide community partners, including other transportation providers, nonprofits, and social service organizations, state agencies, and major healthcare providers who are key players for competing for large, federal grant programs.
- Engaging other stakeholders (beyond those described above) besides EDTAC, to include seniors, persons with disabilities, veterans, low-income populations, and other identified transportation-disadvantaged groups.
- Conducting outreach to assess interest in developing a pilot or demonstration project(s).

- Developing methods, partnerships, and strategies to disseminate information about transportation and mobility options.
- Improving information on existing services and provide appropriate formats (i.e., digital media, traditional media, social media) to customers and specialized transportation providers.
- Building partnerships to promote regional transit awareness campaigns.
- Expanding public information about traveling training opportunities to targeted groups.

6. Elevate the Importance of Land-Use and Transit Integration

In Delaware, land-use decisions are made at the local level, while the bulk of infrastructure (e.g., transportation infrastructure, systems, and services) that support land-use decisions are funded by the state. Delaware's *Strategies for State Policies and Spending* provides policy guidance for state activities and serves as a framework for coordinating the plans and actions of local governments. Yet, promoting integration of land-use and transportation planning is no easy task. The importance of integrating land-use decisions with transit investments should be elevated.

One topic of discussion at the county workshops involved land-use and transit planning disconnects. Changes in demographics, shifts in land-use patterns, and the disconnection between land-use and transit planning can all drive demand for specialized transportation services (including paratransit) in Delaware. "Demand drivers" of paratransit services in Delaware include the development of "age-restricted" communities in remote areas, policies permitting private roads and cul-de-sacs, first- and last-mile barriers to transit, and the location of community service facilities relative to transit. IPA is conducting concurrent research to identify and map community facilities that drive demand for specialized public transportation services in Delaware. In addition, IPA, in collaboration with WILMAPCO and DTC, mapped the location of "age-restricted" retirement communities (also called "active adult," 55+ or 62+, independent living communities) in Delaware. These communities (as opposed to "assisted-living, continuing care, or skilled nursing" facilities) may generate a future demand for paratransit and/or specialized transportation services as these residents age-in-place and may lose their ability to drive. In addition, preliminary research points to issues concerning the evolution of manufactured home communities in Sussex County from seasonal, resort-oriented places to year-round, residential and mixed-use communities. Land-use and transportation planners need to assess the extent to which these communities are becoming targeted destinations that attract retirees and low-income individuals seeking low-cost housing options. This shift in land use may have implications for state services—particularly transportation

and/or emergency services—in Level 3 and Level 4 areas that may be flood-prone and inaccessible during inclement weather. Suggested strategies include:

- Advancing a transit-supportive development framework in Delaware—possibly based on FTA’s typologies, such as transit-ready development, transit-integral development, transit-adjacent development, and transit-coincidental development (Santasieri, 2014).
- Promoting the adoption of local transit-supportive land-use practices to better integrate transit planning with local land-use planning (e.g., access management, mixed-use and multi-density development, street connectivity standards, integrated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, context sensitive design, and other techniques that improve the link between transportation and land-use planning).
- Heightening the awareness and need for local governments to collaboratively address first- and last-mile barriers to transit (e.g., ADA accessibility, dim lighting, lack of transit shelters, poor signage, sense of security or safety, condition of sidewalks, lack of bike infrastructure, or absence of other amenities).
- Creating and sharing GIS datasets and maps (via FirstMap Delaware: <http://firstmap.gis.delaware.gov/>) with layers displaying the age-restricted communities and their relation to fixed routes, bus stops, paratransit buffers, flex zone buffers, and state strategy levels.
- Leveraging Delaware’s Downtown Development District program and the newly adopted Healthy and Transit-Friendly Development Act as policy frameworks to incentivize market-rate and affordable infill development within transit corridors, foster transit-supportive development, and better align local decision-making with transportation investments.
- Working with the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination to develop PLUS process strategies to better align the location of active-adult communities and community service facilities with State Strategy Levels and existing/planned fixed-route transit routes.
- Sharing outcomes of this study and summary report on identifying/mapping community facility locations along with a link/access to GIS datasets.
- Advancing the need for Dover/Kent County MPO and Salisbury/Wicomico County (Md.) MPOs to conduct a transportation justice study similar to the one conducted by WILMAPCO.
- Conducting GIS mapping and geospatial analysis to better understand the extent to which manufactured home communities in Sussex County are evolving from seasonal, resort-oriented places to year-round, residential and mixed-use communities and assessing whether these communities may generate a future demand for paratransit and other state services.